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Testimony by Marcia DuFore  
On Behalf of Amplify, Inc.  
Before the Public Health Committee  
in Support of H.B. 6550 An Act Concerning The Office Of Health Strategy's Recommendations  
Regarding Various Revisions To Community Benefits Programs Administered By Hospitals  
March 8, 2021

Dear Senator Mary Daugherty Abrams, Representative Jonathan Steinberg, and Members of the Public Health Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly,

My name is Marcia DuFore and I am a registered voter in the town of Suffield, Connecticut. I am testifying as Executive Director on behalf the Amplify, Inc., the Regional Behavioral Health Action Organization (RBHAO) for North Central Connecticut, member of the Connecticut Prevention Network (CPN), NAMI, and Keep the Promise Coalition (KTP).

I stand in support of HB 6550 An Act Concerning the Office of Health Strategy's Recommendations Regarding Various Revisions to Community Benefits Programs Administered by Hospitals. Amplify is one of five Regional Behavioral Health Action Organization (RBHAO) charged by the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to study the behavioral health needs of people in our region and assist with setting priorities with local providers, and government officials for new, improved or expanded services. We rely on Community Health Needs Assessments (CHNAs) as one source of data for understanding local needs and local priorities.

Tying community benefit programs to the needs identified in these CHNAs is a critical component for hospitals to serve as "anchor institutions" in their communities and can help us advance health equity. The work of Amplify has its roots in the statutory functions of Regional Mental Health Board, established to ensure that at the grassroots level, people most impacted by behavioral health issues would have a key role in identifying needs, recommending policy, and monitoring services and the service system. We have been witness to many positive results when providers and policy makers have listened to, been influenced by, and invested their resources in response to the perspectives and recommendations of people who rely on them for care.

The pandemic has highlighted how important community resources are to maintaining health in times of vulnerability. Community benefit dollars must be used to address health disparities and the social determinants of health that contribute to them. Supporting a community benefit and community building spending floor ensures that nonprofit hospitals' reinvestments stay

local and help to financially support needed community resources. Nonprofit hospitals are exempt from state and federal corporate income taxes as well as property taxes that would otherwise fund local resources. These dollars should be invested in their local communities to promote social, environmental, economic, and health resources and practices that lead to recovery, health, and inclusion.

Reporting should include information about health outcomes, detailed uniform data describing the demographic makeup of the community, and how the hospital identifies and prioritizes community needs, including how the hospital solicits meaningful community input and feedback. The collection of race, ethnicity, and language (REL) data is a critical component of evaluating health outcomes and ensuring health equity for everyone. By consistently collecting and publishing health data broken down by race and ethnicity, we can evaluate who, how, and where disparities occur.

I believe that changes to community benefit regulations should: define “meaningful participation,” explicitly require that community participation reflect the demographics of each hospital’s community, require standardized reporting of data on the race, ethnicity, primary language, disability status, sexual orientation, and gender identity of the community, and include a public comment period to solicit public feedback on annual reporting by OHS on community benefit programs.

Thank you for all you do and for your time and attention to these important matters.

Sincerely,

Marcia DuFore